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This essay engages with the growing reality of refugee resettlement, specifically in Europe, and aims to find roles for anthropology in this field. By drawing on the ideas of applied and public anthropology along with the long history of anthropological studies of migration, I intend to call the field of anthropology to action. Various potential roles exist for anthropologists in Europe that can alleviate the suffering of displaced individuals. Roles also exist for the field of anthropology to work towards more holistic and effective refugee resettlement. While this essay focuses primarily on resettlement in Europe, I hope it can spark conversations of anthropology and refugee resettlement across the world. The field of anthropology can and should engage with this increasingly important issue. It is time for anthropology to take action.

Keywords

Applied Anthropology, Refugee Resettlement, Europe, Public Anthropology

Disciplines

Anthropology | Migration Studies | Social and Cultural Anthropology

Comments

Written as a Senior Capstone in Anthropology.

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An Applied and Public Anthropology of Refugee Resettlement in
Europe:
A Call to Action

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ANTH 400 Capstone
Spring 2020

Abstract

This essay engages with the growing reality of refugee resettlement, specifically in Europe, and aims to find roles for anthropology in this field. By drawing on the ideas of applied and public anthropology along with the long history of anthropological studies of migration, I intend to call the field of anthropology to action. Various potential roles exist for anthropologists in Europe that can alleviate the suffering of displaced individuals. Roles also exist for the field of anthropology to work towards more holistic and effective refugee resettlement. While this essay focuses primarily on resettlement in Europe, I hope it can spark conversations of anthropology and refugee resettlement across the world. The field of anthropology can and should engage with this increasingly important issue. It is time for anthropology to take action.

Introduction

The word “refugee” sparks mental images of massive camps filled with the displaced and people lumped together on boats off of the shores of Europe. These are the images we see; this is the world of refugees that the media portrays. Camps and boats are indeed realities for the modern refugee population; however, there is more to this picture than meets the eye. One topic that has been gaining in coverage throughout the years is the concept of refugee resettlement. In the face of the “refugee crisis” the world has become more accustomed to resettlement. Europe has become the focal point in the eyes of the global North, with massive amounts of media coverage pouring out of European countries on refugees and resettlement. European resettlement programs have grown drastically in the last decade, and European nations currently occupy a substantial share of global resettlement space (Fratzke and Beirens 2020).

As resettlement increasingly becomes the reality in Europe, the question of how to deal with influxes of the displaced can be found in the media and on the debate stages of various countries. In the midst of the debates surrounding refugee resettlement, there is a hidden gem of the academic world poised to break through and make tangible strides in helping the issues that surround the complex topic of resettlement. Anthropology has long been an overlooked discipline, but the methods and teachings it offers pair well with the issues created by resettlement. A rising facet of the discipline is what is known as applied anthropology, although some argue for a public anthropology instead. Rather than picking between these two similar ideas, I argue for bringing their concepts and methods together and using an anthropology of action, an anthropology that takes the issues of the world head on. More specifically I argue for an anthropology of action in the realm of refugee resettlement. In analyzing the case of Europe, the roles of an action based anthropology have the potential to improve not only the system but

the lives of refugees who find themselves on the margins of society. The roles of an action based anthropology of resettlement are as translators and guides, champions for appropriate policies, and as activists bringing the stories of refugees to the mainstream.

I will first engage with a discussion on the nuances of who a refugee is and look at the history of refugees, along with an overview of the current situation of refugees both in general and in Europe. Then I will look into the relevant literature of both applied and public anthropology as well as anthropology and public policy. After discussing the relevant literature of anthropology and migration I will also outline refugee resettlement. Finally, the before mentioned roles of an action based anthropology in the field of refugee resettlement will be looked at in-depth. The review of both applied and public anthropology, along with the anthropological approach to migration is key in setting up the field for intervention in refugee resettlement.

In writing this paper I hope to call to action the field of anthropology. Anthropology has an amazing amount of potential to enact positive change on a population who truly needs it. No one wants to be a refugee, and those who find themselves with this unhappy label are too often shunned and looked at with suspicion. As Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said, "Refugees live in a divided world, between countries in which they cannot live, and countries which they may not enter" (cited in Moorehead 2006). Anthropology can help in shaping resettlement, a potentially durable solution to one of the most salient and growing issues in our world. While it is true that Europe cannot be expected to host every refugee in the world, there are already significant populations within its borders, and therefore it offers the perfect place for anthropology to begin this action based approach to resettlement. This paper is written with the hope that it can spur other developments and ideas in helping resettle and take care of the displaced and vulnerable.

The Refugees

Refugee is a status determined in relation to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, which denotes the legal status of a refugee as “someone that faces well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (Collier and Betts 2017, 4). According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) there are currently nearly 71 million people displaced around the globe. Of these, around 26 million are considered to fit the definition of a refugee (UNHCR 2019). While the rest are either internally displaced, or asylum seekers, both of which are as important as refugees. This paper will focus specifically on the situation surrounding refugees. Refugees and related issues continue to be of vital importance as the result of fragile states, civil wars, climate change, and other factors that drive human displacement (O’Neil 2019).

The History of the Modern Refugee

During World War I questions were raised on how to classify a refugee, as well as who should be classified as one. The question of repatriation, or the process of returning an individual to their country of origin, was also a major discussion (Gatrell 2015). It is here we can begin to trace, in the complex context of war, serious efforts to deal with the displaced. There are significant parallels between this time period and displacement, and today. Gatrell (2015) points out, “Refugees were the subject of critical comment: negative views of unhealthy and undisciplined refugees circulated alongside positive images. Bold metaphors expressed the sense of overwhelming threat to social order. The press and the public used language that was directly reminiscent of disaster” (41). Similar ideas are present in today’s refugee situation. There are many metaphors of water used, such as “flood”, “tide”, and “flow” in describing the arrival of

displaced people. These metaphors often connote a fear of being overwhelmed, which is particularly relevant in European discussions (Holmes and Castañeda 2016, 18). In the post-World War II confusion and hardship, the 1951 Convention was adopted. Originally this Convention, a piece of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was organized to help those in Europe who had fled their homes in relation to events before January 1951. This geographical limitation was removed by the 1967 Protocol, which made the 1951 Convention universal. Collier and Betts (2017) see the United Nations refugee regime as a hastily created organization, reflecting the time. Decisions were made by the United States and their Western allies, and because of this the refugee regime failed in dealing with current situations (34). This critique is important to keep in mind while discussing refugee related topics in the current situation.

During the 1980s the number of refugees spiked, going from ten million to seventeen million. This can be attributed to political unrest in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. As Moorehead (2006) explains, refugees at increasing rates were driven from their homes in the developing world by violence and human rights violations and began to travel further afield than ever before. They began arriving in larger and larger numbers in European nations, seeking to claim asylum (35). In the 1990s the UNHCR, the main international refugee organization faced criticisms for their reaction, or lack thereof, in relation to massive human displacement in Kosovo. Jeff Crisp, a former high level administrator in the UNHCR, stated that the organization was “profoundly dysfunctional, failing to provide protection to all those most in need of it and condoning discriminatory practices that ensure that only people with access to considerable amounts of money can hope to escape from unstable countries” (Moorehead 2006, 40). These criticisms greatly affected the reputation of the UNHCR and have had an impact on their approach to the issues of today. Sadly, between 1992 and 1997 the UNHCR budget was slashed,

and the effects were felt worldwide, particularly in Africa. As all of this was happening negative reactions to refugees increased. Refugees then and now are seen as scapegoats for various issues, sadly they are often associated with danger and even terrorism.

The Current Refugee Situation

The refugee regime currently operating has not been static over time; however, it has remained path-dependent and the system that is in place today still mostly resembles the one that was created post-World War II. The world on the other hand has changed radically. As already noted, the number of refugees worldwide currently sits at about 26 million. The number of displaced people globally is at an all-time high. To truly put it in perspective, every two seconds someone around the world is forcibly displaced (UNHCR 2019). Today, around half of the world's refugees are children according to Amnesty International and the UNHCR. These astronomical numbers reflect the seriousness of the current situation and help point out why any intervention is necessary, ideally one that involves anthropology.

Why so many refugees?

There are many factors that contribute to global displacement today, but Collier and Betts (2017) point some of the key concepts that are driving this issue. Today's numbers have been driven upwards by fragility, which can be understood as the most salient cause of displacement (Collier and Betts 2017). Three main factors have contributed to this fragility: the end of the Cold War, global spread of democracy, and technology. State capacity was reduced in the post-Cold War era in many places, and democracy has been implanted in lopsided fashions in multiple fragile states. Technology on the other hand has connected the globe, but also allowed protests and unrest to spark. When discussing global displacement, and the number of refugees worldwide these factors should be regarded as crucial elements of the situation today.

Unfortunately, international refugee laws remain rooted in the notion of “persecution” but ignore the reality of fragility (Collier and Betts 2017). Other issues such as climate change are increasingly becoming refugee producing problems and are similarly left out in the current refugee regime as carried out by the UNHCR and countries around the world.

Who are the refugees, and where are they going?

As of 2017, roughly 90 percent of refugees reside in havens across the developing world, and around ten of these developing countries host well over half of the world’s refugee population (Collier and Betts 2017). With continued refugee flows in the past three years or so following similar patterns, we can assume the general message of these numbers is still relevant. The UNHCR (2019) notes that 57 percent of refugees they work with come from just three countries. Syria is the source of the highest number of refugees at nearly seven million, while Afghanistan and South Sudan follow with about three million and a little over two million respectively. Amnesty International adds to these figures, pointing out that around a third of refugees, or about 6.7 million people, are hosted within the poorest countries of the world. The top ten host countries in the world help solidify this fact, with one significant outlier. These countries are as follows (as of 2019); Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Uganda, Germany, Iran, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Bangladesh. The obvious outlier in these countries is Germany, the only “western” nation to make the list. Germany makes this list after in response to the Syrian refugee crisis, Chancellor Angela Merkel implemented the “open-door policy”. This opened the country to refugees but had significant backlash. Eventually Merkel abandoned the policy, but the political fallout lingers (O’Neil 2019, 5).

It is relevant in any discussion of refugees to understand where they come from and where they are going. This is especially true if the best policies are to be put into place.

Understanding that most refugees are not in fact in Europe or America can help combat fears and uncertainties, but it should also help point out that current efforts are misplaced and misguided in many cases. Collier and Betts (2017) tell us that \$1 is spent on a refugee in the developing world, for every \$135 of public money spent on an asylum seeker in Europe (3). This does not mean of course that we can forget the plight of those in Europe, as this paper engages with. This is especially important considering the fact that the gap between the rhetoric of the West and the reality on the ground has never been larger. Western rhetoric all too often uses the narrative of uncivilized refugees “flooding” the nations of the West. The reality is in fact quite the opposite, most refugees stay in the global South and those that do make it to the shores of Europe or elsewhere are often quite well off in comparison to the average refugee.

Anthropology of (and for) the Masses

In the beginning anthropology had, at least partially, a slight lean towards the public. This was simply good practice; if you wanted to get published, you had to write for a larger audience as there were only a handful of professional anthropologists around the world (Borofsky 2019). Anthropology, even in the most academic sense, grew out of the idea of application (Rylko-Bauer, Singer, and Willigen 2006). As anthropology developed worldwide as a discipline, those writing could afford to publish with only those studying anthropology, or well-versed in the subject in mind. Fortunately, there has been a revival of anthropology that is not only aimed at non-academic audiences, but also anthropology that is applicable in the real world, that is public, and even anthropology that works within the field of policy.

Applied, Engaged, and Public Anthropology

Before going further, it is relevant to discuss the basics of applied anthropology, as well as engaged and public anthropology, all of which are similar but with some key differences.

Regardless of the terminology, these approaches to anthropology have important implications for the field and the world. When defining anthropology, Barbara Johnston (2012) states that as a subject, applied anthropology essentially relates to research, methods, and outcomes that are developed to recognize, understand, and address human problems. Some have even referred to it as the fifth sub-field of anthropology. Applied anthropology at its core is concerned with improving the human condition and moves to make policies and ideas widespread in both the public and private sector (Cohen 1985, 249). Cohen goes further with this point, and contends, “Applied anthropology can and *should* simulate and improve upon this natural evolutionary process. Instead of waiting for natural forces of selection and retention to find the most adaptive solutions, we can assess the goals, needs, and changes demanded by what *is* present in a situation” (260-61).

Applied anthropology is not without its critiques of course. One critique is the unfortunate correlation between a more applied version of anthropology, and work done by anthropologists in the past in connection to colonialism, where anthropology in many cases supported colonialist or imperialist regimes (Rylko-Bauer, Singer, and Willigen 2006, 180). This is an unfortunate legacy that the discipline still struggles with today. For this reason, among others, Rylko-Bauer, Singer, and Willigen (2006) argue for “an inclusive conceptualization of applied anthropology as ‘anthropology in use,’ which more accurately reflects disciplinary reality” (187). In short, those practicing anthropology (of any sort) must be conscious of how what they produce affects not only those they study, but larger political agendas (Castañeda 2010).

Engaged and public anthropology are pieces of the field of anthropology that have amazing potential to enact change. As Besteman (2013) argues, “Public and engaged

anthropology are not new concerns but rather emerge from anthropology's long history of involvement with world exhibitions, museums, public debates about issues like race, immigration, sexuality, and 'action' anthropology." (3) Engaged anthropology is essentially a collaborative anthropology that is values driven and associated with value judgements (Besteman 3). While public anthropology is better understood as an endeavor that is anthropologically relevant and interesting while working at the same time to reduce human suffering (McGranahan 2006, 256). Public anthropology should also be seen as pointed towards a non-anthropology based audience and seeking to improve the public image of the field (Besteman 2013). Public anthropology should not be seen as simplification or watering down, but rather an attempt to translate complex ideas into easy to digest and engaging language (Haugerud 2016, 586). This part of the field has the opportunity to use the discipline to make real change on a larger scale: "Anthropologists capture tensions and textures of everyday life in ways that can alter perceptions of spectacular events such as terror attacks, refugees arriving on Europe's shores in flimsy and overloaded rafts, gun violence in low-income U.S. neighborhoods, or protests that become 'riots'." (Haugerud 2016, 594-5) In other words, "If anthropology cannot be put to service as a tool for human liberation why are we bothering with it at all? ... [public anthropology] has an opportunity to become an arbiter of emancipatory change not just within the discipline, but for humanity itself" (Scheper-Hughes 2009, 3).

Anthropology of Public Policy

An anthropology that engages with public policy is another fruitful discussion to have, although some would argue that anthropology should stay out of the realm of policy. Anthropologists have cautioned against policy related study, because it can potentially end up hurting those that they study. By contrast, Shore and Wright (1997) argue that, by their nature,

policies are anthropological phenomena. This is because they can be read in inherently anthropological ways, such as in the context of cultural texts, devices that classify various meanings, ways to justify or condemn present situations, or as something that attempts to either empower or silence individuals (7). Simply put, anthropology as a field of study is well positioned to engage with both cultural and philosophical ideas behind policy and its uses (Wedel et al. 2005). It is an understudied field, but policies make up an important area of inquiry from an anthropological perspective (Vertovec 2011).

Haines (2013) provides an excellent conceptual idea of what public policy should do, noting that it should stay consistent with beliefs, social conditions, and ethical considerations. Therefore, it should be cemented in national political and cultural context, while still maintaining an increasing level of synchronization with at the very least minimal international norms (78). From this fairly simple conception of public policy, it is easy to see how anthropology has a role to play. As a discipline working both at the top and at the ground level, anthropology can provide unique perspectives, particularly concerning the interactions of public policy with both private interests and those of the state and other actors (Wedel et al. 2005).

The need for anthropological study that is relevant in the world of policy has been looked at by many, but Okongwu and Mencher (2000) offer a particularly good insight:

“As we enter the twenty-first century, the terrain in which social policy is made has been changing rapidly. These changes include the collapse of Eastern Europe and the increased economic power of multinational corporations, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund insofar as they affect the day-to-day life of most human beings on this planet.” (108)

With these changes in mind, anthropologists have worked with several different approaches to deal with complicated and complex policy, doing analysis of networks, institutional ethnography, and “studying through”, which looks into the effects of a policy by studying those affected (Baba 2013, 4). Another way of thinking about anthropology’s role is to see it as understanding the ways public policy maintains the interests of neo-liberal states, or as an advocacy based consideration of how actual people are affected by a specific public policy (Haines 2013, 77).

This anthropology of public policy is crucial, as anthropology has at its core a disposition to pay attention to the human effects of policy (Haines 2013, 85). Since anthropologists follow the connections and contexts yielding the whole person, they are then required to follow the multiple connections and contexts that yield whole policies (Haines 2013, 86). Anthropologists view policy-making as a non-linear process and expect to encounter unforeseen variables and deal with unexpected results, which may at times contradict the stated goals of a particular policy (Baba 2013). It is of the utmost importance then to understand the role of anthropology in attempting to shape public policy, by assisting in understanding issues in society. Proposing solutions that meet the desires and needs of local people, and creating synergy between theory and practice, fits the mold of anthropological study (Okongwu and Mencher 2000, 109). At the end of the day, what matters is that an anthropology of public policy should add to the body of knowledge on how the world is changing, as well as provide a corrective to the simplified models of public policy that are currently in journals and textbooks but fail to produce results. An anthropology of public policy should primarily aim to spur theoretical and methodological development that strengthens both anthropology and interdisciplinary study of policy (Wedel et al. 2005).

Why should anthropology be public?

Anthropology as a field has a lot to offer in general, but anthropology available to the public extends the possibilities of a field poised to make real change. A public anthropology can benefit people in ways they can recognize and appreciate (Borofsky 2019). There is of course the unfortunate history of applied anthropology, in the context of colonialism. However, anthropology can learn from this history and continue to engage with public, non-academic audiences at greater levels. As Scheper-Hughes (2009) notes, if anthropology cannot be put to use for improving the human condition, then why bother?

Anthropology at its core has methods and theories that attempt to understand day-to-day interactions, rituals, customs, and beliefs, in the most holistic way possible. The American Anthropological Association states, “Anthropology is the study of what makes us human.” There is no reason that anthropologists cannot move to make this focus, and their understandings of what exactly makes us human, available to the public. Anthropology has a unique way of translating the world and understanding both the mundane happenings of everyday life and the larger structures that shape our world. The world today requires new and different policies, as well as advocacy for change within governments, international agencies, and multinational organizations (Okongwu and Mencher 2000, 119), anthropology can help in both regards and help tie the issues back to the people who are affected. Both the field, and the public can benefit from an anthropology that is applied and public. Anthropology that delves into the world of public policy is inherently public, and therefore should be included in this discussion of a public anthropology. These together can help everyone understand what makes us human. A place of great promise for anthropology generally, but also this concept of public anthropology, is in the study of migration.

An Anthropology of Migration

Harrell-Bond and Voutira argue, “Of all the disciplines involved in the study of human behavior, we contend that anthropology has the most to contribute to the study of refugees” (1992, 6). Similarly, Haines (2013) sees the connections between migration, which of course includes refugees, and anthropology to be productive and very clear (77). Another passionate call for anthropology and migration is the idea that anthropologists must work with displaced and vulnerable people in a way that is critical, bold, and reflexive. This is work towards less violent futures and a generally better human condition (Holmes and Castañeda 2016, 21). The field has certainly taken up the call of studying migration in recent decades, as Vertovec states, migration is no longer somewhere in between the center and periphery, but is rather firmly placed in the center (2007, 974).

Anthropologists studying migration is not a new phenomenon, as anthropology has been studying migration and its effects since at least the 1930s (Vertovec 2007). In both ethnographic inquiry and theorizing, the movement of people has captured the attention of anthropologists for a long time, including archeologists and linguists (Baba 2013, 1-2). In the 1970s anthropological research on migration was within the general model of modernization theory. This focus has shifted, as migration no longer flows with labor markets, but rather with informal economies (Kearney 1986). As Baba (2013) notes, “It is tensions inherent in the dynamics of globalization, transnationalism, and the nation state that figure prominently in contemporary anthropological literature on migration.” (3)

Studies of migration with an anthropological lens allow for an understanding of culture as an inherently political issue and politics as cultural (Vertovec 2011, 242). Therefore, anthropology can be seen as providing useful insights into power dynamics and structures, which could put anthropology in a position to contribute meaningfully to policy on migration (Harrell-

Bond and Voutira 1992). This discussion can be continued by understanding that “‘good’ migration policy would be consistent with general political and cultural context” (Haines 2013, 79). Anthropology can help provide this context for policy, since anthropology is a field that relies on participant-observation and therefore more deeply understands these key contextual factors (Colson 2003, 2). Being aware of political-economic structures, and symbolic contexts that produce migrant and refugee experiences could help offer possibilities for meaning making, as well as for potential responses (Holmes and Castañeda 2016). There are three interconnected systems that must be considered in a study of migration: community of origin, fellow migrants, and “host” society (Bottomley 1998). Anthropologists have the ability to interact and understand complex and vastly different groups and therefore are perfect in working among these three interconnected systems. These systems are interconnected, but extremely complex and varied, hence the need for anthropologists. In the face of a globalized world, migration is an overarching question to be addressed, and anthropology has and should continue to grapple with the intricacies of migration and related issues.

An Anthropology of Refugees

Of course, there is also the question of refugees that must be addressed in any discussion of migration studies, but particularly in the context of anthropology and migration. The twentieth century has been referred to as the “century of the refugee”, which is seen in the salience of research on the forcibly displaced (Colson 2003). The twenty-first century so far has been just as much a “century of the refugee”. In an anthropological sense, refugees are individuals who have undergone a violent “rite” that separates them, and until they return to their homes are in a state of “liminality” (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992, 7). Some believe that the future of anthropology will be focused on the questions that are contained within the study of refugees and displacement

(Colson 2003). There are many roles and avenues for anthropology to take in general involving refugees. An interesting role to consider is in anthropologists helping to bring migrant experiences to the table. This stems from the understanding that it is fundamental to have migrants (refugees) in any sort of policy discussion (Haines 2013). We can also consider the fact that a need exists for anthropologists to act as translators, and to communicate the perspectives of refugees (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992, 8). Another role is in the realm of policy, since in most Western contexts, there is a lack of an organized apparatus of policy that addresses cultural change that is driven by cultural difference (Vertovec 2011, 247). Lastly, ethnography has the potential to link human experiences to larger social and economic structures, which can challenge the frameworks within which refugees are currently understood (Holmes and Castañeda 2016, 20). The theories and tools that make up the field of anthropology are positioned to critique current understandings and engage with current events, and the study of refugees is an area that anthropology can critique and engage with in ways that are more effective than the ones currently in place (Holmes and Castañeda 2016, 21).

A Critique for an Anthropological Study of Refugees

While an anthropology of refugees sounds like a great idea, there are some worries and critiques to acknowledge. It is somewhat ironic that after a hiatus, refugees have once again become a “first-world problem”, even though they have been around for centuries (Cabot 2019). Cabot makes an important point in relation to his discussion of anthropology in the European refugee crisis: “The refugee regime is a business, tied up in wide-ranging political-economic interests, much like the ‘rescue industry’ that focuses on sex-trafficking” (262). It is obvious that anthropologists have expanded their analyses of current contexts, in the face of globalization and other tensions (Okongwu and Mencher 2000). Cabot takes issue with this idea in the context of

anthropological scholarship on the refugee crisis, seeing it as potentially replicating ideas of apartheid and marginalization, that have darkened previous anthropological interventions (Cabot 2019, 262). She notes a study by Ruben Andersson from 2014 that states anthropological scholarship on clandestine migration is a product of, and contributes to, the regimes of securitization and humanitarianism that make migration illegal (Cabot 2019, 262). Because of this, anthropology must remain aware of how it approaches displacement, making sure that the approach is both empirically rich and uses critical and engaged forms of reflexivity in analyzing wider power structures (Cabot 2019, 263). Anthropology must also be aware of “rapid” scholarly responses, and avoid crisis chasing (Cabot 2019). In the end Cabot (2019) notes that anthropology may (but not necessarily) be able to provide a safer or more privileged audience for refugee experiences than other audiences (270). However, it is crucial that anthropologists stay aware of the potential negative side effects of anthropological literature on an issue such as refugees and approach this issue and others in an engaged and critical way. If anthropologists maintain an awareness for the value of their potential contributions and stay away from the issues that Cabot (2019) points out, they can be instrumental in the idea of refugee resettlement.

Refugee Resettlement

The UNHCR has established resettlement as one of their “durable solutions” in dealing with forced displacement, alongside local integration, and voluntary repatriation (Garnier, Jubilut, and Sandvik 2018, 1). Furthermore, the UNHCR outlines three main principles of resettlement to follow. Resettlement should provide a perspective for refugees most in need of protection. Also, acceptance for resettlement should be especially crucial for people in protracted refugee situations without a return option and without the possibility of integration in their first country of asylum. Lastly, resettlement should be seen as an expression of shared responsibility

with the first countries of asylum which are strongly affected by forced migration (Baraulina and Bitterwolf 2018; O'Neil 2019, 3). Refuge, and resettlement, at its very core is associated with the idea that when a person faces serious harm, they should be able to flee their homes and receive access at a safe haven (Collier and Betts 2017, 4). If this is the case, and the UNHCR has provisions for resettlement, then it is troubling to realize that refugee resettlement is in fact not codified in international law. It has only been used a type of soft law, with understandings of resettlement found in handbooks of the UNHCR. The lack of legal framework makes resettlement a more difficult process to advocate for and undertake (Garnier, Jubilut, and Sandvik 2018). A state could go from supporting resettlement one day, and the next suspend the practice, with no regard for those being resettled. Refugee resettlement until recently has received little academic attention, but it is growing as a multidisciplinary effort, one in which anthropology is and should be involved (Garnier, Jubilut, and Sandvik 2018, 3).

The Difficulties of Resettlement

It is first worth noting that governments annually spend drastically more money to deal with a smaller number of asylum seekers than they do on humanitarian relief in the poor host countries that carry the burden of refugee populations (Moorehead 2006). This being said, there is an argument to be made that more money should be spent on both the poor host countries, as well as bringing more refugees to safer shores for resettlement. The resettlement process as it stands is one of great complexity and is marked by power imbalances along the way. For example, a candidate for resettlement cannot bring counsel to a resettlement interview, nor do they have access to translators in many cases. Resettlement candidates do not have the resources, information, or power to help themselves (Garnier, Jubilut, and Sandvik 2018, 13). This paper focuses on the dynamics and issues of resettlement in Europe. However, like Garnier, Jubilut,

and Sandvik (2018), I would also advocate for more research on resettlement in the Global South, where the majority of refugees are located.

Anthropology and Refugee Resettlement

Applied anthropology, as already discussed, is concerned with the idea of improving the human condition (Cohen 1985). For this reason, I argue for an anthropology that is both applied and public and deals specifically with the concept of refugee resettlement. Based on the numbers there is no secret that displacement, and more specifically refugees and resettlement are issues that must be understood using effective methods and approaches. There are many anthropological studies involving migration or refugees, but not much has been done with an anthropology that has both an applied and public approach, that deals specifically with resettlement. The recommendations outlined in this paper address this missing component of anthropological study with regard to refugees.

Refugees in Europe

Although arrivals in Europe have declined since peak numbers in 2015-2016, refugees are still arriving in Europe, fleeing from any number of issues. The year 2015 was the height of arrival in Europe, with 1,032,408 refugees according to the UNHCR (2020). So far in 2020 about 19,000 refugees have arrived in Europe. As of March 2020, the three top arrival locations were Greece, Spain, and Italy, with around ten thousand, five thousand, and three thousand respectively (UNHCR 2020). Afghanistan and Syria remain the top countries of origin for refugees arriving in Europe. The threats of fragility, along with climate change, disease, and other issues will continue to drive migration. Different and innovative policies, and approaches are needed to help with both new arrivals, and those already in Europe.

Why study resettlement in Europe?

Europe as the western hotspot of refugee resettlement offers up a space for study. As mentioned previously, it is important to note that refugees by and large are not “flooding” onto the shores of Europe, they generally are staying in countries of asylum that are geographically close to their home country. This is not to say Europe cannot and has not had a role in the current refugee situation. Europe is such an important location to study because of its relative proximity to refugee producing countries, compared to America for example. In fact, since 2017 nearly 40 percent of refugees resettled through the UNHCR have found homes in Europe (Fratzke and Beirens 2020). The way Europe deals with refugee resettlement has major effects on the refugee regime as a whole, and therefore is an important location to focus on. As Europe has become the center of resettlement innovation, new ideas in strengthening and growing resettlement have been born there (Fratzke and Beirens 2020). Anthropologists working in Europe could have a major impact on resettlement, both in the capital buildings and in the neighborhoods of the displaced. The effects of this work would go well beyond Europe and could greatly impact resettlement in general.

What has anthropology done so far in Europe?

Anthropology has worked with the displaced for decade and in the context of the recent so-called refugee “crisis” in Europe, anthropology has found a few ways to make an impact. An exciting example comes from the work of Selim et al. (2018). A group of refugees, activists, and anthropologists in Berlin came together to improve the conditions of refugees. One of their main goals was to find ways to bring together diverse publics or groups of individuals, in order to improve current conditions and create innovative alternatives to the existing reality of “integration” (Selim et al. 2018, 35). Their study is crucial in that it represents the fact that anthropologists can easily find themselves doing the sort of action based work this paper argues

for. Their work has improved the lives of refugees and created a strong example for others to follow. This kind of applied and public anthropology can reveal the solidarity that has sustained the human race for generations (Haugerud 2016). Selim et al. (2018) go on to note that in this moment in time being engaged and coming together helps eliminate imagined differences, as well as re-thinks the roles of anthropology while working towards a better future (40).

This sort of work with refugee resettlement is not limited to Europe. Perhaps one of the better known examples, at least in the United States, is the work of Catherine Besteman with Somali Bantu refugees in Lewiston, Maine (Besteman 2016). Besteman who had previously done field work among the Bantu people in Somalia was able to help when they found themselves as refugees. Her actions have helped the community of Lewiston accept these refugees from Somalia and allowed for more Bantu resettlement in Maine. Her work shows how instrumental anthropologists can be among refugee populations and in host communities.

Other anthropologists have done work in the fields of policy or with humanitarian groups. However, anthropology has much more to offer. The discipline is well suited for the study of migration and refugees according to various scholars in multiple decades (Harrell-Bond and Voutira 1992; Vertovec 2011; Haines 2013). Unfortunately, too much of this scholarship has been just that, scholarship. Some anthropologists have contributed to refugee resettlement research: there seems to be a discrepancy, however, in applying the research conducted to actual application in a practical manner (Bergstrom 2019). A more applied and public anthropology is called for, specifically an anthropology of action.

The Needed Roles for Anthropology in Resettlement

Waldron (1988) saw decades ago that social anthropological research and inquiry must be a piece of any serious refugee relief attempt. Without the informed understandings produced by

anthropological research, the system will (and has) remain a primarily top down one (164).

Anthropology is a discipline that is nearly unrivaled in locating and comprehending the narratives of those on the margins, exactly where refugees find themselves (McGranahan 2006, 263). It is within this conceptualization of anthropology that we can understand a variety of roles for the discipline in the world of refugee resettlement, and specifically resettlement in Europe.

Although her work focuses on anthropology and resettlement in America, Hannah Bergstrom offers a few key ideas to consider. She notes that in immigrating to the United States refugees often struggle with the confrontation of their home culture with the strong American culture present (Bergstrom 2019). This is true in Europe as well, many resettled refugees wish to maintain their cultural and social ties, while host societies want assimilation. Returning to the American example, Bergstrom (2019) thinks that having even the most basic of understanding of a host country's values and world-view could go a long way in shaping resettlement policies, since unfortunately this cultural understanding is usually disregarded. Anthropology could help bridge this gap (Bergstrom 2019).

Another location anthropology is failing to insert itself is in the field of resettlement policy (Bergstrom 2019). Anthropology has many scholars, as already discussed, that see the value in an anthropology of public policy. The discipline can and should recognize its potential role as activists as well. Anthropologists are now able to act both as an anthropologist and as an activist, allowing for action that previously may have been seen as unscholarly (Morreira 2011). This is in response to the rise of applied and public anthropology as subsets of the field. Anthropology has the opportunity to bring the issues of refugees and their struggles of resettlement to the mainstream (Bergstrom 2019). We cannot forget that anthropology still relies on writing as a key element of the discipline. In this vein, it is crucial to understand that this

writing can be used to turn the discipline into a field of engagement (Selim et al. 2018).

Engagement with refugees and resettlement can go a long way in improving the lives and circumstances of the displaced. The potential roles for anthropology are complex, and potentially difficult to implement, but they all deserve further consideration. Of all of the potential roles for anthropologists, I argue that there are three major roles that need immediate consideration and implementation.

Cultural Translators and Guides in Resettlement

As Harrell-Bond and Voutira (1992) point out, there is a considerable need for anthropologists to be translators and also to express the perspectives of refugees. Analyzing the role of anthropologists as cultural translators and resettlement guides can be done by looking into the case of Germany, and its resettlement of Syrian refugees. In Germany, like all other locations of resettlement, there are major concerns associated with an influx of people that are different culturally. For example, (Hindy 2018) notes in the context of Syrian refugees in Germany many refugees wish to maintain their strong traditions, while Germans would prefer complete and total assimilation. As Moutasem Alkhnaifes, a refugee in Berlin put it, the approach by Germany, overall, appears to be a one-sided conversation with refugees (Hindy 2018). In response to this Abal (2009) notes that integration can only be a successful process if it is a two-way process, with a society willing to accept immigration and immigrants willing to make efforts to integrate. Therein lies a role for anthropology, a role in which anthropologists can act as the middlemen, sparking conversations and understanding between refugees and Germans. Refugees in Germany have encountered over the years a growing antagonism on the part of German citizens. This is shown in everyday actions, such as being refused housing, being expelled from homes, and facing general hostility in the workplace as well on the streets (Bar'el 2018). Here there are

many avenues for intervention by anthropologists. As noted earlier, refugees often wish to maintain their strong cultural ties. This is one reason, and one of the major ones, that they may face this sort of antagonism being expressed by the German public.

Anthropologists, by virtue of their academic training, are well equipped to view and understand nuanced cultural understandings, as well as use an outside or observer perspective. In anthropology these viewpoints are often referred to as emic and etic. In the case of refugees in Germany, anthropologists can relate both with an “emic” perspective, or the cultural understandings provided by the refugees themselves along with the “etic” perspective, or the viewpoint of the Germans, the outsiders if we are taking the view of the refugee. This of course can be flipped, if German culture is viewed with the “emic” lens, anthropologists can help the outsiders, the refugees, understand the German culture. As more refugees from Syria arrived in Germany, they were less welcome (Bar’el 2018). If we attribute this to misunderstanding of cultures on both sides, or a lack of will to understand each other, the value of an insertion of anthropology is clear. This idea is easily transferrable to places around Europe that are also resettling and integrating refugees.

Taking the same example from above, anthropology can help in guiding those in the process of resettlement. Here anthropology can ease the transition, perhaps better than any other. There are of course advocacy groups, churches, and individuals who everyday help refugees in their new lives, and we cannot forget their roles. However, the understandings of culture and people more generally that anthropology is able to produce, makes helping in guiding refugee resettlement much easier and potentially more effective. In Germany one of the major facets of resettlement is language learning. Anthropologists can help teach refugees not only language but

culture and, by extension, can teach Germans about the cultures of refugees and therefore ease tensions and the process of resettlement.

In looking at anthropology of migration and refugees, much of the literature is primarily on theoretical understandings involving the movement of people. Anthropology should continue in this academic pursuit, but there are opportunities on the ground, every day, for anthropologists to help. In the German resettlement process, the opportunities for anthropological intervention in ways that translate cultures and ease resettlement processes are clear. Katz, Noring, and Garrelts (2016) point out that in Germany the services needed to provide for refugees defy the normal capacity of modern bureaucracies, and this rings true across Europe. Anthropology can and should help in bridging cultural gaps, and well as in guiding both refugees and hosts through the difficulties of resettlement.

Lobbying for Resettlement Policies

Bergstrom (2019) makes obvious that a key location in the discussion of refugee resettlement in which anthropologists have failed to insert themselves is in the world of policy. A world that many scholars have made passionate pleas for anthropologists to step into. First and foremost, any policy that involves refugees should in theory have refugees present at the table; however, this is not the reality. Anthropology can be key in bringing refugee perspectives and needs to the table, and therefore help create better and more effective policies that actually cater to those that they are made for. In a European context it is important to note that there is no cohesive or common migration policy, and former agreements such as the Dublin Agreement are not working as they were intended (Fuller 2019). As scholars such as Wedel et al. (2005) and Haines (2013) argue, anthropology has an inherent disposition for work in the field of policy. Anthropologists are able to understand the deeper cultural and societal factors that shape policy.

Therefore, anthropologists could be key in Europe in helping create effective policies that include the voices of refugees.

As it stands today, there is rarely a consideration of what refugees want in terms of policy both regionally and on a country by country basis. Policy makers are not on the ground and do not have knowledge of the finer details of the lives of refugees. They do not know of the cultural or religious ideals refugees are bringing with them from home, nor do they often realize how refugees are going about surviving in Europe. It is important that those involved in refugee resettlement understand how cultural backgrounds and viewpoints of the future affect how refugees go about their lives being resettled (Howell 1982). Anthropologists can help enlighten policy makers on both of these. This is best understood in the words of Haines (2013) who makes clear that anthropology pays attention to the human effects of policies and can follow and comprehend the connections and contexts that make up a policy. Policies on any subject are usually complex to a fault, but the complexity is heightened significantly on an issue such as resettlement. Too often this is because policy makers do not understand refugees, and refugees do not understand the policies.

While anthropology should look to influence policies in countries that better the process of resettlement and improve the lives of refugees, as already stated there is no coherent European policy on resettlement. Here is where anthropology could look to enact major change. Anthropologists can look past individual policies in particular countries and work together to understand the overall needs and situation of refugees. I am not downplaying the fact that each country will have its own strategy on resettlement due to a number of factors; I am simply pointing out that a lack of comprehensive approach to resettlement in Europe makes life harder for everyone, both host countries and refugees. Since anthropology at its core is positioned to see

linkages and complex ties, it is thus able to translate these ideas into better and more effective policies that help in refugee resettlement.

Anthropology as a discipline has cautioned against getting involved in public policy, for fear that their insights and understandings may end up hurting those they wish to help. In the context of resettlement, a concern would be that governments and policy makers might use the knowledge created by anthropologists to further discriminate against refugees. This is a risk; however, the situation of resettlement desperately needs change and anthropology can provide the needed push. It would be crucial for anthropology to carefully pick where it wishes to insert itself in the world of European refugee resettlement policies, as some situations may be better suited for anthropological intervention than others. Refugee resettlement policy is one way that an anthropology of action can create tangible change. In the end it is important that anthropologists use their platform to help refugees in voicing their needs in the resettlement process particularly in the realm of policy. (Bergstrom 2019).

Activism and Bringing Resettlement Mainstream

Until somewhat recently the field of anthropology was set against working in an activist role, but due to the recent rise in applied and public anthropologies and the outspokenness of several anthropologists activism is now tolerated if not accepted by the field. Lobbying for policy is one thing but taking on a more activist role and campaigning for the sake of resettled refugees is another. There are many organizations already on the ground in places across Europe who work with resettled refugees. An anthropological intervention has the potential to help these groups better understand the needs the refugees, in the context of the cultural and social understandings of different groups of resettled individuals. Where there are not organizations working on the ground, anthropologists could be key in promoting the need for one and

potentially helping to start it. My own experience working with an NGO in Florence, Italy, which aided in resettlement opened my eyes to this need of a more in-depth understanding of who is actually being helped and how they should be helped. During this experience I was shown that the needs of refugees in the process of resettlement are more complex than the average community aid organization, church, or NGO is able to handle. The need for more complete understandings of refugees and their needs was clear after a short period of time. Anthropology immediately came to mind as a way for these needs to be met. Much like the other roles for anthropology in resettlement, I believe that the worldview and strategies taught to anthropologists would allow them to assist in the process of resettlement and help refugees voice their needs and opinions. Working within cultural and social networks, anthropologists have the opportunity to act as activists on the ground in resettlement situations in a meaningful way.

Anthropology relies heavily on writing as noted already by Selim et al. (2018). This can be used in making anthropology a field of engagement and allow anthropologists to bring the complicated issues of resettlement to the mainstream. Writing that is based on work on the ground in communities of resettled refugees could have deep and long lasting impacts on the hosts, refugees, and general public in terms of how resettlement is viewed and conceptualized. While there is mainstream media coverage of refugees and resettlement, too little of it ever reflects the views of the refugees themselves. Anthropology is becoming better and more focused on reaching public audiences, and refugee resettlement is a place the discipline could find itself writing for a less anthropological base and reaching other individuals. There is still value in writing more academic focused pieces in order to help drive forward progress in anthropology and other fields on the study of refugees and resettlement, but a public audience should be the focus. Lastly, anthropology should help refugees find their voices and reach the mainstream with

their stories. The tales of refugees are often condensed or ignored and anthropologists working in refugee resettlement should work to bring these voices to the front. By engaging with host communities, refugees, and the mainstream media, anthropologists can aid in bringing together various viewpoints and ideas and work to improve the overall situation for everyone, particularly the refugees.

Potential Issues of an Anthropological Intervention

Overall, the concept of anthropology engaging with refugee resettlement has positive connotations, but there are some concerns that may be raised in this action based anthropological approach. The focus must be on aiding the process of resettlement and engaging with the issue of resettlement in critical and reflexive ways that avoid “crisis chasing” and the other perils discussed by Cabot (2019). Anthropologists working in Europe must not reproduce the European refugee regime in a way that continues to marginalize refugees. However, I believe that well-rounded approaches, and carefully selected locations for intervention can help alleviate this concern and allow for successful anthropological action.

The other concern that may be raised is that anthropologists may not have the training for this sort of work. I truly believe that the general teachings and methods of anthropology will lead to successful intervention in relation to refugee resettlement. Anthropologists even in their traditional role of long-term participant-observation are never truly prepared and must learn quickly on their feet. The same goes for work in resettlement. Other concerns may involve funding and sponsorship, but for now I believe it is enough to recognize the significant roles anthropology could have in refugee resettlement and strive to act in this realm for the good of refugees everywhere.

Conclusion

Refugees and refugee resettlement are no longer issues that can be ignored or swept under the rug as a temporary crisis. The reality is that human displacement is on the rise and refugees and resettlement are quickly becoming one of the most salient issues of our time. In response to this fact, now more than ever, holistic and reflexive approaches are needed. Refugee resettlement is a durable solution to deal with the vast number of refugees worldwide.

Anthropology as a discipline has the amazing potential to work within the world of refugee resettlement in a way that benefits all involved. As an increasingly public field, anthropologists can take advantage of their training and methods to raise the standard of resettlement, using Europe as jumping off point. Anthropology has long studied migration from a theory based perspective, but it is time for an anthropology of action. The current refugee situation is unstable, and efforts in resettlement are disjointed, even in a place as wealthy and sophisticated as Europe. I argue that anthropology should work in the realm of refugee resettlement by being translators and guides in ways that move the resettlement process forward, by helping discover and advocate for better resettlement policies, and finally by being activists and helping bring the true stories of resettlement to the mainstream. I call the field of anthropology to action and hope that refugees and resettlement are no longer just on the radar but are a way for anthropology to make the world a better place. It is no small task, but anthropology has the potential to kickstart a movement to engage with refugees and resettlement in a better way than ever before.

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